

CHAPTER X

COLONIAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ANYONE who habitually refers to Macaulay's History as a collection of facts about the period it covers will find in the end that there are some subjects upon which it supplies ample and exact information and others upon which it is neither full nor accurate. This is natural since every historian must form his own conception of the relative importance of the different episodes included in his narrative and treat them at greater or less length accordingly. But often this selection is influenced by accidental or purely personal reasons. Some subjects may be briefly treated because the information accessible at the moment is insufficient.

Others may be treated in a perfunctory fashion because the author has little interest in a particular class of questions. So it is with Macaulay. It is clear that constitutional, social, and economic questions attracted him most. Nothing which happened inside the British Isles was without interest for him or unfamiliar to him ; but he took less trouble to understand events which happened outside them, even when they greatly influenced the development of the British state, and the future of the British race. Often he failed to appreciate the connection of European or extra-European affairs with British affairs, and the limitation of his horizon affects the perspective of the story.

One result is very remarkable.

Macaulay practically
omits the history of the British colonies
during the whole
period he treats. He devotes many long
passages to the